3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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with her, is also a danger to all the men concerned. These triple relationships are constantly mentioned in court cases and are made the subject of claims by the injured family of a dead man or woman who declare that 'their child' has been killed in that way. They recur in narratives of the rather lurid sex lives of Bemba princesses who are expected to take many lovers, but must not bring trouble on the land by simultaneous relations of this kind.

Lastly, in common with many Bantu peoples, Bemba believe that, if a man commits adultery while his wife is pregnant, the baby is born dead. He has taken the spirit of the child (*asendo umupashi wa umwana*). If the woman is unfaithful while she is pregnant, then she herself dies in childbirth unless she confesses and gets medicine in time.[1]

I have dilated on this system of attitudes and beliefs because I think it fundamental to the understanding of Bemba puberty ritual and also because it cannot fail, I think, to strike the field-worker in this area as one of the basic elements of tribal dogma. It would be impossible to live long in a Bemba village without running constantly across instances of the effects of these beliefs whether in terms of ritual or in the most practical problems of cooking, catering and entertaining. If the Bemba can be said to have an ideological obsession in the sense that they are constantly pre-occupied with one set of fears, it is this belief in the magical potency of sex, fire and blood. Such emotional attitudes set us puzzling problems. In this chapter I shall confine myself to stating them. Later in the book I hope at least to suggest some hypotheses which may stimulate comparative research in other tribes holding similar beliefs.

To recapitulate, Bemba dogma stresses the role of the ancestors in determining human fortunes as well as the power of injured spirits, who revenge the injustices they suffered on earth on the

[1] It will be seen from the above that the causes of barrenness or death in childbirth are numerous among the Bemba. Barrenness may be due to the special curse of the father's sister; to an injured spirit returning to punish a descendant at random; to allowing the umbilical cord of a baby to fall to the ground; to adultery; or to witchcraft. Miscarriage is thought to be due to an injured spirit shaking the womb of the pregnant woman so that the baby falls out; when it occurs all the women of the matrilineage must be treated with medicine. Death in childbirth is due to the adultery of the mother herself.

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The Ceremony

The centipede (Song 64). This is a form of centipede like an enormous caterpillar which appears with the rains, with a black back and yellow legs. The model is coloured white. The song tells the girl that she must not have intercourse too often or she will produce twins which will die: multiple births like the many legs of the centipede. Or according to another account, she is warned to do purification after twins.

G. GENERAL ETHICS

The hyena (Song 64). A realistic figure with spines down its back. The girl is not to steal like the hyena.

The tortoise (Song 50, Fig. 13). For this model Nangoshye and her fellow *banacimbusa* squatted on their toes and jogged up and down to the music, pushing their heads alternately out and in with a curious change of expression from the eager and questing to the blank and uninterested as they sang:

> '*The tortoise when it is at home puts in its head*
> *Into its shell.*

The girl is not to be like a woman who, when she goes out visiting, peers into every basket and pot saying, 'Friend, what is here? Give me a taste of this. Let me share that.' Whereas when the friends come to visit her, she sits with lowered head and tries to divert attention from the food in her own house.

H. THE CHISUNGU CEREMONY

Some models refer to the rite itself.

The cardinal bird (Song 63) is a small bird painted white, with spots of red on its wings. The *kabangula* has a red crest and hence resembles the *nacimbusa* of old days who had a red feathered headdress.

The egret (Song 48, Fig. 11). A bird on a twig. The song refers to the whitening and beautifying of the girl (see pp. 88–9).

The lion (Song 56, see p. 129). This is a large pot closed on top and with two open arms—it is called the lion because a noise resembling the roar of a lion can be made by blowing down one arm and blocking the other. The lion symbolism has been described before.

similar solemnization of the fertility of a union. (See Appendix A.) 842 171

If a Bemba husband fails to give his wife a child, his marriage comes to an end. If he makes her pregnant, but she dies in childbirth, he will be held responsible by the heads of her matrilineage and by her father and mother. He is said to have 'killed' their child.[1] On the other hand, if he succeeds in the hazardous enterprise of Bemba marriage, he 'founds a house' and acquires not only status but rights of approach to his own matrilineal ancestors. 586 845 581

The honouring of the son-in-law in the chisungu also enacts the desire of the womenfolk to attract a young man to make his home in their village. There may be more in the chisungu mimes than this. It is at least possible that the women had an unconscious sense of guilt about robbing fathers of their children, children who are so much wanted and which only men can give. Bemba girls are brought up in a male-dominated society and are taught to kneel to men and to put them first. Their fathers are respected autocrats in the home, but are dethroned as their children grow up and realize that ultimate power lies with their mothers' brothers. The women court men to give them children, but they do not allow them the full rights of a sociological father or *pater*. They deny him ultimate power over his children; perhaps they compensate him by giving him exaggerated respect in the chisungu as the procreating male.[2] 881X 562 593

Sex hostility is not apparent in the chisungu. There are songs which can be interpreted as mocking at men but I did not hear them sung, and they do not seem to be an integral part of the ceremony. The women certainly stress their complete command over matters concerning childbirth. The mother of the girl, her father's sister, and the mother of the boy unite in this respect: this sex grouping cuts across those based on lines of descent. The secrecy of the chisungu may be women's compensation for their seclusion from other aspects of tribal life. But there is nothing to 881X 562 578

[1] When a Princess was safely delivered of a child in the old days, the friends of her lover did the dance for a lion-killer returned from the hunt and shouted 'He is saved! He is saved!'

[2] D. Schneider reminds me that according to psycho-analytical theory the penis of the man is equated with his child. He suggests that the Bemba father is robbed of his child but compensated by the symbolic representation of his virility in the chisungu.

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Appendix B

Some informants said the girl was to be taught cooking; and others that the hearthstones represented the settled married life.

No. 62. *The pot* (*mutondo*). The girl is to carry water and look after the house.

No. 63. *The cardinal bird* (*kabangula*). This is a small white bird with red spots on it. It represents the *nacimbusa*, since it has a red crest like the plumes of the *nacimbusa* in old days.

No. 64. *The hyena* (*cimbwi*). The girl is told not to steal like the hyena.

No. 65. *Cibone Musuba*. This is a conical-shaped model covered with small projections.

It is said to represent a tree and it is also the name of the beautiful head-wife of a legendary chief. The husband is to look upon his wife as the most beautiful of all women just as the chief preferred his head-wife to all others.

No. 66. *The centipede* (*congolo*). This is an animal about six inches long like an enormous caterpillar, which appears with the rains. The *congolo* has many legs.

The song warns the girl to perform purification after twins; or, according to another account, she is warned not to have intercourse too frequently or she will have twins—multiple births like the many legs of the caterpillar.

10: Barnes M-5 (ca. 1920) 1922 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

775 He is quick to know that the child's crying is caused by the *mupashi* who wants to
787 confer a name, but he can only find out which name the *mupashi* is interested in by
553 going over the names of the great men of the family. The name may be that of a quite remote ancestor, although the *mupashi* is but recently freed. The process of carrying on the name may have begun long ago in the interest of some specially memorable man or woman. The child, by the way, may be of either sex. The *mupashi* will indicate that the right name has been pronounced by leaving the babe in peace. When the babe ceases to cry at one of the names offered, the *sing'anga* announces that the child is to bear that name, and the mothers see to it that it is so. If all the bearers of a name so conferred die out, the name is forgotten, the ancestor no longer survives even as a *mupashi*, and a full stop is reached in that chain.

●[845] The new-born child is always or usually named in this way. In the case of twins the first-born will have a name so given, but the second will be called simply "Twin," "Pundu."

H. BARNES.

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